



Raphael: Cartoons and Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel

8 September – 17 October 2010

The V&A announces that four of the ten tapestries designed by Raphael for the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City will go on show in September 2010. These are the original tapestries from the only series designed by Raphael of which examples survive, and are comparable with Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel Ceiling as masterpieces of High Renaissance art. The tapestries will be displayed alongside the full-size designs for them – the famous Raphael Cartoons, which have been on display in the V&A since 1865. This will be the first time that the designs and tapestries have been displayed together – something Raphael himself never witnessed. The tapestries have not been shown before in the UK.

The tapestries, of the Acts of St Peter and St Paul, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, *Christ's Charge to Peter*, *The Healing of the Lame Man*, and *The Sacrifice at Lystra*, were made for the Sistine Chapel almost 500 years ago. Raphael was commissioned by Pope Leo X to design these great tapestries, which were woven in Brussels, Europe's leading centre for tapestry-weaving, and then sent to Rome for display. As the cartoons remained in Brussels, Raphael himself never saw the cartoons beside the tapestries woven from them.

Several European monarchs, including Henry VIII, later commissioned copies of the tapestries which were made from the cartoons in Brussels. In 1623 Charles I, while Prince of Wales, had the cartoons brought to England to have his own set woven in the Mortlake tapestry workshops, and they have remained in England ever since.

The Vatican Museums own the tapestries from the Sistine Chapel. The cartoons belong to the Queen, but have been on long-term loan to the V&A since Queen Victoria lent them in 1865. The cartoons are too fragile to leave the Museum building so they have never left the V&A.

The four tapestries will be hung in the V&A's Raphael Gallery next to the seven cartoons. The design of each cartoon corresponds in every point, but in reverse, to the tapestry it was made for. The weavers cut Raphael's cartoons into strips and copied them closely, weaving each tapestry from the back. The front image was thus the reverse of its cartoon. The painted strips of cartoon were joined together again later, and became prized as artworks in their own right.

The exhibition of the tapestries will take place over a six week period to coincide with the historic visit to England and Scotland of Pope Benedict XVI.

Mark Jones, Director of the V&A said: *"This is a marvellous opportunity to see great Renaissance masterpieces reunited for the first time in almost 500 years. We are very happy to show these important works in our Raphael Gallery."*

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Notes to Editors

This exhibition is made possible by a collaboration between the V&A and the Vatican Museums and is generously supported by Michael and Dorothy Hintze and The Hintze Family Charitable Foundation, with further support from the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums.

The Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums is an organisation dedicated to the conservation and preservation of one of the world's greatest collections of art which has been displayed in the Vatican for more than 500 years. More information at www.vaticanpatrons.org and <http://mv.vatican.va>

Tickets to the exhibition are free. Timed tickets will be in operation. Advance booking is strongly recommended and tickets will be available from 1 July 2010. Visit www.vam.ac.uk from 1 July for more information.

The V&A is the world's greatest museum of art and design, with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity, and with 3000 years' worth of amazing artefacts from many of the world's richest cultures including ceramics, furniture, fashion, glass, jewellery, metalwork, photographs, sculpture, textiles and paintings.

For further PRESS information about the exhibition contact the V&A Press Office on 020 7942 2497/2500 or email press.office@vam.ac.uk (not for publication)

(A press image of *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* is available. Please contact press.office@vam.ac.uk)